



MDA News Digest April 2013



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A Message from Secretary Buddy Hance

Greetings,

Spring has started and the 2013 General Assembly Session has ended. Before the busy season shifts into high gear, I wanted to bring you up to date on some of the more significant legislative actions taken during this session that will affect agriculture and MDA.



Secretary Hance

* The most important bill to pass was the [Maryland Agricultural Certainty Program \(SB 1029\)](#), which will allow us to develop a program in cooperation with the Maryland Department of the Environment that will allow farmers who voluntarily implement advanced best management practices (BMPs) to conduct their business without additional regulations for ten years. After ten years, however, farmers will have to be in full compliance with all regulations in effect at that time. The intention of the program is to help speed up Bay Restoration efforts by encouraging farmers to more quickly implement BMPs while providing them with a predictable regulatory environment. I congratulate Governor O'Malley and members of the General Assembly for working together to authorize this important tool.

* [Animal Welfare – Spay/Neuter Fund \(HB767 / SB820\)](#) will establish a new program within MDA that will provide grants to organizations that offer spay and neuter services for dogs and cats. Funds will be raised by increasing the registration fee on cat and dog food, which is paid by pet food manufacturers.

* [The Maryland Pesticide Reporting and Information Work Group \(HB775 / SB675\)](#), which will be staffed by MDA, will determine what pesticide-related data is required by various entities, identify gaps in that information and develop recommendations.

* [Income Tax – Subtraction Modification – Enhanced Agricultural Management Equipment \(HB 408/SB404\)](#) expands the existing conservation tillage equipment income tax subtraction modification to include purchases of other kinds of equipment, including manure spreading equipment, vertical tillage equipment, GPS devices, and more. The modification begins in tax year 2013 and to certain equipment purchases made after Dec. 31, 2012. Talk with your tax adviser if you think this law will impact you.

* [Task Force to Study the Implementation of a Hub and Spoke Program in the Southern Maryland Region \(HB 1019\)](#). The task force will study and make recommendations regarding the nutritional needs of low-income, working poor, and unemployed populations of the Southern Maryland region.

* [Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation – Easement Restriction \(HB 378\)](#) authorizes the foundation to reimburse a landowner who has paid for a lot that was released so s/he could build a home for himself or for a child.

* MDA also had two departmental bills, which will help us streamline some internal operations. [One bill](#) abolished MDA's Board of Review which has not met in several years and the [other bill](#) consolidates four special funds that support the State Chemist into a single fund. It does not raise fees or change any fee structures.

To read the written testimony that MDA submitted about these and other bills, [see our website](#).

Headlines from MDA

Below are some of the news release MDA recently distributed.

- [April is Invasive Plant, Pest and Disease Awareness Month; Public Urged to Help Prevent Spread of Invasive Pests that Feed on Agricultural Crops.](#)
- [Farmer's Markets Begin Opening; 2013 Maryland Farmers' Market Listings Available Online.](#)
- [Statement from Maryland Agriculture Secretary on the Passage of SB 1029 – Maryland Agricultural Certainty Program.](#)
- [MDA Announces New Specialty Crop Grant Program; Application Deadline is May 20.](#)
- [MDA Encourages Homeowners to Protect the Chesapeake Bay by Changing Fertilizer Habits, Complying with New Lawn Fertilizer Law.](#)
- [Maryland Teens Get Back to Nature to Prepare for First Round of Environmental Education Competitions.](#)



[Read all press releases](#)

On the MDA Blog

The MDA Blog highlights some of the more informal news in and around MDA and Maryland ag.

- [What's Blooming at MDA Now?!](#) Many flowering trees and shrubs on the grounds of the MDA headquarters are coming into bloom. Check the blog to see what they are.
- [April is Invasive Pest, Plant and Disease Awareness Month.](#) The MDA blog highlighted some of Maryland's Most Unwanted Pests:
 - [Maryland's Most Unwanted Pests — Gypsy Moth](#)
 - [Maryland's Most Unwanted Pests — Hemlock Woolly Adelgid](#)
 - [Maryland's most Unwanted Pests – Emerald Ash Borer](#)

[Read all Blog posts.](#)

New AgBriefs Released

AgBriefs are short descriptions of MDA programs and initiatives.

- [See all AgBriefs](#)

Facebook: What are we talking about?

We update our [Facebook](#) page several times a week. Some recent posts are shown below.

- Four Seasons, 50 Events: Watch Maryland Horses in Action
- MDA Joins Fort Meade for Earth Day
- Frederick Career and Technology Center Students tour MDA's Turf & Seed Lab
- Agriculture Secretary Buddy Hance Appears on Fox 45 Sunday

- Maryland Agricultural Commission Spring Tour
- Follow and Like us on Facebook!**

MDA on the Web

The MDA website is your go-to place for the latest information about MDA. We are adding new information every week.

- **MDA's Gypsy Moth Cooperative Suppression Program** has posted maps and schedules for spraying, scheduled to begin in April. [See the page.](#)
- **Maryland's Lawn Fertilizer Law** takes full effect in October. For frequent updates, [see the page.](#)
- Our redesigned News Room is the hub for all information released by MDA, from press releases to blogs. Visit the [News Room.](#)



Gypsy Moth

Visit us anytime at: www.mda.maryland.gov

MDA In Pictures

MDA's [Flickr](#) account has photos of MDA events while our [YouTube](#) playlists have videos about various agricultural topics.

View [MDA Flickr](#):

- The [Maryland Agriculture Commission](#) toured six farms in Montgomery and Howard counties this month. To see photos of the tour, see the [Spring 2013 Flickr Set.](#)
- What's in bloom at MDA? [See Flickr for photos](#) of the blooming flowers on MDA grounds.

Follow Us on Social Media

On Twitter: *MDA has several twitter feeds you can follow for quick updates. We hope you'll follow us.*

- [@MdAgDept](#) – the official twitter account of the Maryland Department of Agriculture
- [@MdsBest](#) – the twitter feed for MDA's Marketing Office and the Maryland's Best Program
- [@MdEquines](#) – the twitter feed for MDA's Maryland Horse Industry Board
- [@MdFarm2School](#) – the twitter for MDA's Farm to School Program
- [@MDGypsyMoth](#) – the twitter feed for MDA's Forest Pest Management during gypsy moth spraying season. (It is not currently tweeting but will be soon.)

On Facebook: MDA has several Facebook pages we invite you to "like."

- [MDA's Official Facebook page](#)

- [Maryland's Best Facebook page](#)
- [Maryland Farm to School Facebook page](#)
- [Maryland Young Farmers Advisory Board Facebook page](#)

Upcoming Events & Deadlines:

- [Innovations in Manure Application Field Day](#), April 24, Garrett County.
- [MDA to Administer Compost Facility Operators Exam May 2](#) in Annapolis
- [Training Workshops Offered for On-Farm Poultry and Rabbit Processing Certification](#), May 7, in Cambridge.
- [Specialty Crop Grant Applications Due](#), May 20
- [Fundamentals of Nutrient Management Training Course](#), June 17-18 in Annapolis
- [Nutrient Management Training and Certification for Nursery Operations](#), July 10 in central Maryland.

We invite your feedback

Thank you for reading our newsletter. We are always looking for ways to improve how we serve our constituents. Please send your comments, suggestions and ideas to mda.news@maryland.gov or call 410-841-5881. Or contact:

- Julie Oberg, Communications Director, 410-841-5888, julie.oberg@maryland.gov
- Vanessa Orlando, Public Information Officer, 410-841-889, vanessa.orlando@maryland.gov

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